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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/769,076	01/25/2001	Michael D. Krysiak	P/35-4	7143

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04/12/2007

EXAMINER

VALENTI, ANDREA M

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3643

SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE	MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
3 MONTHS	04/12/2007	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/769,076

Applicant(s)

KRYSIK ET AL.

Examiner

Andrea M. Valenti

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 25 January 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-30,32,36-42 and 45-53 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 1-25,36,37,39-42,45,46,48,49,51 and 53 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 26-30,32,38,47,50 and 52 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 26, 27, and 38 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,324,781 to Stevens.

Regarding Claim 26, 27, 38, Stevens teaches a colored mulch product (Stevens abstract line 2) consisting essentially of: a material comprising a fiber cellulose, clay, loam, sand, and/or a combination of same; a binding agent (Stevens Col. 2 line 2); and a dye and/or pigment (Stevens Col. 6 line 35). Stevens teaches a dye and that the dye indicates to a user environmental conditions of the soil where the mulch is placed. The mulch of Stevens includes both a dye and a fertilizer. Therefore, when the user sees the mulch color the user will know that mulch has been applied to that portion of soil along with a fertilizer i.e. that soil portion has been fertilized which is an environmental condition.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

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(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 38, and 50 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,324,781 to Stevens in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,019,062 to Lombard et al.

Regarding Claim 26, 28, 29, 30 and 50, Stevens teaches a colored mulch product (Stevens abstract line 2) consisting essentially of: a material comprising a fiber cellulose, clay, loam, sand, and/or a combination of same; a binding agent (Stevens Col. 2 line 2); and a dye and/or pigment (Stevens Col. 6 line 35). Stevens teaches a dye, but is silent on the dye **indicates** to a user environmental conditions of the soil where said mulch is placed; the dye **indicates** to a user the acidity of said soil; the dye **indicates** to a user the moisture content of said soil; or the dye **indicates** to a user the chemical content of said soil and it is an environmentally safe dye (Lombard abstract second to last line).

However, Lombard et al teaches a dye indicator i.e. a pH indicating dye for application to cellulosic material such as paper (Lombard Col. 2 line 1-5 and Col. 2 line 11-15; Col. 2 line 60-67). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the teachings of Stevens with the teachings of Lombard at the time of the invention since the modification is merely an engineering design choice involving the selection of a known alternate dye selected for the known advantage of monitoring pH levels as taught by Lombard and is an environmentally safe dye as taught by Lombard (Lombard abstract).

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Regarding Claim 27, Stevens as modified teaches the mulch comprising; nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium fortifiers (Stevens abstract last line).

Regarding Claim 38, Stevens as modified teaches the mulch is the same or similar color of an actual plant, flower, fruit, or vegetable of a seed planted with the mulch (Stevens Col. 6 line 37).

Claim 52 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,324,781 to Stevens in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,019,062 to Lombard et al as applied to claim 26 above, and further in view Japanese Patent JP 01262735 A to Yanmar Agricult Equip Co LTD.

Regarding Claim 52, Stevens as modified teaches a method of placing colored mulch on top of soil; changing the colors of the mulch based on the condition of the soil. Stevens is silent on adding chemicals to the soil based on the color of the mulch. However, it is old and notoriously well-known in the art of plant husbandry to observe and test soil conditions to see if they meet the desired parameters and to adjust the parameters when necessary. Yanmar teaches the general knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art to add fertilizer when the pH is out of desired range (Yanmar abstract and Fig. 1 #2). General knowledge that the pH of a growing medium component determines the addition of fertilizer. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art further modify the teachings of Stevens with the teachings of Yanmar at the time of the invention for the advantage of promoting healthy plant development. Examiner takes official notice that it is old and notoriously well-known to add fertilizer based on a pH of

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the soil e.g. tomato plants prefer a certain acidity in the soil for healthy development so it is general practice to test the pH to determine if and how much fertilizer is needed.

Claim 32 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,324,781 to Stevens in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,019,062 to Lombard et al as applied to claim 26 above, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,734,167 to Skelty.

Regarding Claim 32, Stevens as modified teaches coloring the mulch, but is silent on the dye is florescent. However, Sketly teaches it is old and notoriously well-known to dye agricultural products with florescent dye allowing the mulch to glow in the dark (Skelty Col. 1 line 35-45). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the teachings of Stevens with the teachings of Skelty at the time of the invention since the modification is merely the selection of a known alternate coloring for the advantage of enabling safe night time agricultural operations as taught by Skelty (Skelty Col. 1 line 1-26).

Claim 32 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,324,781 to Stevens in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,734,167 to Skelty.

Regarding Claim 32, Stevens teaches coloring the mulch, but is silent on the dye is florescent. However, Sketly teaches it is old and notoriously well-known to dye agricultural products with florescent dye allowing the mulch to glow in the dark (Skelty Col. 1 line 35-45). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the teachings of Stevens with the teachings of Skelty at the time of the

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invention since the modification is merely the selection of a known alternate coloring for the advantage of enabling safe night time agricultural operations as taught by Skelty (Skelty Col. 1 line 1-26).

Claim 47 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,067,140 to Thomas in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,019,062 to Lombard et al.

Regarding Claim 47, Thomas teaches a colored mulch product (Thomas abstract) comprising: a material comprising a fiber cellulose (Thomas abstract first line), clay, loam, sand, and/or a combination of same; a binding agent (Thomas Col.1 line 30 "wetting agent" and Col. 4 line 35-41); and a dye and/or pigment (Thomas Col. 1 line 35) produced by a lifting and tumbling agglomeration operation (Thomas Col. 2 line 65-66. Thomas teaches adding fertilizer to the mulch mixture (Thomas Col. 1 line15). Thomas is silent on the dye indicates to a user the environmental conditions of the soil where the mulch is place. However, Lombard et al teaches a dye indicator i.e. a pH indicating dye for application to cellulosic material such as paper (Lombard Col. 2 line 1-5 and Col. 2 line 11-15; Col. 2 line 60-67). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the teachings of Stevens with the teachings of Lombard at the time of the invention since the modification is merely an engineering design choice involving the selection of a known alternate dye selected for the known advantage of monitoring pH levels as taught by Lombard.

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Claim 50 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,324,781 to Stevens in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,697,984 to Swatzina et al.

Regarding Claim 50, Stevens teaches a colored mulch product wherein the color, but is silent on the mulch product fades or disappears in response to a lack of fertilizer in the mulch. Stevens teaches the mulch product is made up of fertilizer (Stevens abstract last sentence), mulch plus fertilizer makes a mulch product. Swatzina teaches it is old and notoriously well-known to color fertilizer (e.g. red fertilizer Swatzina; Col. 2 line 31-33 and Example 4). One of ordinary skill in the art would be motivated to modify the teachings of Stevens with the teachings of Swatzina at the time of the invention for a desired aesthetic design. Stevens as modified by Swatzina, i.e. the selection of red fertilizer, would inherently teach that as the red disappears or fades from the mulch the fertilizer is disappearing too.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claim 26-30,32,38,47,50 and 52 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Regarding Claim 38, merely selecting a particular color is an aesthetic design choice and does not present a patentably distinct limitation. Stevens teaches the general concept in the art of plant husbandry to match the color with a particular plant color which at one time would have been seeds (e.g. green mulch with green grass). Applicant has merely claimed that the mulch is the same **or similar** color of an actual plant (which does not even mean that it is the same plant that is planted in the mulch, but merely any "actual plant" tomato, corn, roses, etc), flower, fruit **or** vegetable of a

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seed planted within the mulch. Therefore, even if the mulch was a green color and a tomato seed was planted in the mulch it would satisfy the limitation of the claim since the actual plant is green and the fruit is red. All that is required is that the actual plant be the same color as the mulch.

Regarding Claim 50, Stevens teaches it is known to use fertilizer in combination with mulch and Swatzina teaches it is known to dye fertilizer to make a red fertilizer (Swatzina Col. 2 line 31-33 and Example 4). Examiner maintains it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the teachings of Stevens with the red color fertilizer of Swatzina at the time of the invention as a means to identify a particular type/concentration of fertilizer and as a visual indicator that fertilizer has been applied. Over time and the fertilizer goes away the red color will inherently change, fade, disappear.

Conclusion

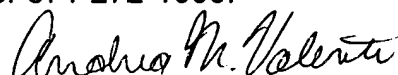
The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. U.S. Patent No. 5,143,023.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Andrea M. Valenti whose telephone number is 571-272-6895. The examiner can normally be reached on 7:00am-5:30pm M-Th.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Peter M. Poon can be reached on 571-272-6891. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.



Andrea M. Valenti
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3643

10 April 2007